



Facultade de Filoloxía

Traballo de
fin de grao

Stephen King from Žižek's
perspective: An analysis of
the problem of identity in
'The Shining'

Autor: Marta González Ferrín

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Table of contents

0. Introduction.....	3
1. Stephen King and popular culture.....	5
2. Žižek on Stephen King.....	9
3. The application of the conceptual apparatus of psychoanalysis to <i>The Shining</i> ...	12
3.1.Introduction to the conceptual apparatus of psychoanalysis.....	12
3.2.Summary of the novel.....	17
3.3.Influences on King's novel.....	18
3.4.Analysis of <i>The Shining</i>	25
4. Conclusions.....	42
5. Bibliography.....	45

0. Introduction.

This paper will study the problem of identity in the novel of the American horror writer Stephen King's *The Shining*. I am going to analyse this novel paying special attention to that topic, and in order to do so I will use an important tool which is the conceptual apparatus of psychoanalysis. I will use Žižek's *How to Read Lacan* and *The Plague of Fantasies* because these two works will be useful to understand certain concepts of psychoanalysis and to apply them to the analysis of the novel.

I will argue that the novel can be analyzed through psychoanalysis in order to be understood in depth. My aim is to see how using a conceptual apparatus changes the way I read the novel. This way I can change from a naïve reading of *The Shining* to a reading which is the result of the application of the conceptual apparatus. One example of that change of perspective is the image of the Overlook Hotel. At first it can be taken as an external force that interacts with the character of Jack Torrance. But if we apply the conceptual apparatus of psychoanalysis to this 'character', we can see that this force in King is not external but internal and in some way, related to Jack. For the purpose of using this apparatus, I had to read and study about psychoanalysis. This topic is not something I studied in the degree, but I think it is interesting as it links literature with scientific fields, in this particular case, with the field of psychoanalysis.

I have chosen *The Shining* because I think it expresses quite clear the loss, mixture, and the split of identity. From my point of view, Stephen King¹ as a horror novelist is worth for an analysis of identity from a psychoanalytic perspective because he usually handles this topic going quite deep on the character's psyche.

¹ Stephen Edwin King was born in Portland, Maine in 1947. (http://stephenking.com/the_author.html) [accessed 17 April 2014] He is a North American horror fiction writer very famous for novels as *Carrie*, *Salem's Lot* or *The Shining*.

I have chosen Slavoj Žižek as a specialist in psychoanalysis, although he is a philosopher, because he masters the conceptual apparatus of psychoanalysis. Moreover, he applies this apparatus to popular texts to make a cultural analysis. So his works are going to be important in the task of applying this conceptual apparatus to the analysis of the novel.

As *The Shining* is a horror novel, I will take into account supernatural elements while analysing it. Sometimes, these elements will be related with the field of psychoanalysis. That is why I will include them as part of the analysis.

The paper consists of three sections, an introduction and a conclusion. The first section, “Stephen King and popular culture”, will mention the impact Stephen King had on popular culture. This will be useful to understand why his literary works became popular and gained some importance.

The second section entitled “Žižek on Stephen King” addresses the fact that King’s novels are important for psychoanalysts like Žižek², who will clarify Freud and Lacan’s ideas within psychoanalysis, and who likes to use Stephen King as an example for some of his theories. In this part of the paper I will use some Žižek’s works like *How to Read Lacan* and *The Plague of Fantasies* as I mentioned before. Moreover, in this section I intent to clarify why I have chosen this author in relation to this topic.

² Slavoj Žižek was born in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in 1949, and is a professor at the European Graduate School, International Director of the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities, Birkbeck College, University of London, and a senior researcher at the Institute of Sociology, University of Ljubljana. [...] As well as providing original insights into psychoanalysis, philosophy and radical political theory. He has, through employing his extraordinary scholarship to the examination of popular entertainment, established himself as a witty and deeply moral cultural critic. (Biographical extracts from Žižek’s own book *The Plague of Fantasies*)

He has different works on Lacan, Hegel or Marx, explaining their ideologies and their works. One of them, *How to Read Lacan*, is part of the primary sources of this paper as it explains several concepts in psychoanalysis in a more comprehensive way than other writers.

The third section, “The application of the conceptual apparatus to *The Shining*”, is the main section of the paper. It is subdivided into four parts. The first part is entitled “Introduction to the conceptual apparatus of psychoanalysis” and it explains different concepts of psychoanalysis which will be used in the later analysis of the novel. These concepts are going to be useful for a better comprehension of the character’s identities. The second part is a summary of the novel because it will be useful to know what the novel is about. The third part is entitled “Influences on King’s novel”. This part is my personal contribution to this paper. It addresses some comparisons between King’s *The Shining* and some Poe’s short stories. I want to point out that some of King’s novels have a clear relation with other American horror fiction writers. We can see different influences within his literary works from Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, etc. However, the most important influence I saw in King’s works comes from Poe. That is why I will compare some Poe’s short stories like *The Masque of the Red Death* or *William Wilson* with *The Shining*.

The fourth and last part of this section is the proper analysis of the novel. In order to structure this analysis, I will take as reference all the identity problems that are important and I will explain them one by one using the different characters as examples.

After these sections, I will finish the paper with some conclusions I came up with while studying this topic.

1. Stephen King and popular culture.

To start with, I should describe the importance Stephen King has nowadays as a bestseller writer, and so explain why I have selected him and this novel for this paper. It is important to see his influence on popular culture, and more specifically, in the field of Cultural studies.

Cultural studies deal with a wide range of discourses. As culture is closely related to history and politics, it will be always subjected to changes in them. As John Storey says,

“the object of study in cultural studies is not culture defined in the narrow sense, as the objects of aesthetic excellence (‘high art’); nor culture defined in an equally narrow sense, as a process of aesthetic, intellectual and spiritual development; but culture understood as the texts and practices of everyday life. [...] It can range beyond the social exclusivity [...] to include the study of popular culture.” (Storey, 1996: 2)

Storey broadens the definition of culture, and includes everyday life. In this case, he is not only considering the common definition of this term, but he is taking into account that historic-political events affect culture.

There have been changes within the American literary production from the twentieth century to these days. An example could be the differentiation between what is considered ‘serious’ novels and ‘popular’ or ‘money-maker’ ones. As Palko says in her essay,

“the rise of “glamour pony” fiction and its multimillionaire authors was one of the defining characteristics of the twentieth-century publishing industry, and it still persists into the twenty-first. The result has been, [...] a differentiation between popular, best-selling fiction and serious, credible literature.” (Palko, *The Popularity Problem: Stephen King’s Cultural Context*)

Thus, there are two main types of literary works. The first one is the ‘popular, bestselling fiction’: novels which became popular thanks to the reception they had among readers, which in turn make authors earn a lot of money. Any literary work can be included in this category because anything can become popular or a bestselling novel.

The second group is called 'serious credible literature'. In this group we find different literary works that may not have been popular among its contemporaries or that are not the bestsellers of their time. The main difference between this category and the other is that this one is not primarily meant to give a lot of money to the writer. Here what is important is the quality of the literary work and not the quantity of money it will produce or its position in best-selling lists.

Going on with Palko's essay, in order to understand why these changes have been produced, it is important to take into consideration the process of sacralisation.

"Sacralization results from a cultural shift in which art becomes less shared across the culture, less the purview of all members of a culture, and instead is elevated in such a way that only elite audiences are considered to have the knowledge and means to access it. [...] Reaching a zenith during the modernist period of the early 1900s, American society became increasingly bifurcated along the lines of "low" and "high" culture." (Palko, *The Popularity Problem: Stephen King's Cultural Context*)

Maybe this happened because of the mass production of literary works, or maybe because our mentality has changed over the centuries; but one thing is clear, in the reception of any literary work, different cultural aspects are involved. One of the latest movements that has had a great impact on literary criticism is Cultural studies.

As Storey says in his book *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture: Theories and Methods*, cultural studies are influenced by Marxism that "informs cultural studies in two fundamental ways. First, to understand the meaning(s) of a cultural text or practice, we must analyse it in its social and historical conditions of production and consumption." (Storey, 1996: 3) This refers to the fact that history and literature cannot be separated. Through literature, we make history and vice versa.

The next thing Storey says that Marxism contributes the cultural studies framework “is the recognition that capitalist industrial societies are societies divided unequally along, for example, ethnic, gender, generational and class lines.” (Storey, 1996: 4) We can understand that society is divided in different social classes. Each social group has different needs and tastes, so there are different types of literature more suitable for each group. But as it is normal in a fragmented society, there are groups that rule and groups that have to obey. These last groups have their own way of protesting against the groups that rule. Sometimes literature is the way they have to do that. However, the main idea we can take from here is that depending on the social group the reader belongs, the reception of a literary work will be positive or negative. In this sense, the social group influences the reader’s taste. This is what classifies a novel as “popular, best-selling fiction and serious, credible literature.” (Palko, *The Popularity Problem: Stephen King’s Cultural Context*)

An important concept we have to take into account when dealing with cultural studies is the term ideology. As Storey says in his book, “Ideology is without doubt the central concept in cultural studies.” (Storey, 1996: 4) It is so important because it has to do with the set of ideas that constitute what people thinks and our way of seeing reality. Through ideology a nation can control its citizens. That is why this concept is so relevant for cultural studies, because ideology is always changing, and with it the reception of the literary works.

In the case of this author, and quoting Palko, “King, born in the mid-twentieth century, arrived in an era in which the cultural producers were inevitably embroiled in an agonistic struggle with their predecessors, the modernists, and in which the divide between the serious and the popular was deeply entrenched.” (Palko, 23-24) In other words, King as a writer was in the middle of a struggle between writers that belong to

different artistic movements. As the division between popular and serious literary works was clear at that time, going from one position to another could be really difficult. This can be a little troublesome if a writer wanted to become successful. The reason lies in the fact that if someone wanted to write a serious novel, that person could not make his work popular in the sense of reaching to a lot of public or make a lot of money with it and vice versa. But King managed to overcome those difficulties and became “one of the bestselling writers in the world, *ever* [...] King writes stories that draw you in and are *impossible to put down*.” (King, 2013: about the author)

At this point, it is easy to imagine that King’s novels can have certain importance in our current society. On the one hand, they are entertaining novels in which monsters and different evil things lurk in the darkness waiting for their moment to get out. On the other hand, and as the main reason why I have chosen to discuss this author and novel, these figures reflect different mental disorders, and some are related with supernatural elements. This relation between the supernatural and the psyche will be pointed out as one of the main traces in King’s novel. Consequently, they are not only fiction novels but they can also be used, to a certain extent, as examples of people’s behavior.

2. Žižek on Stephen King.

The main objective of this paper is to be able to apply a conceptual apparatus, in this case with the conceptual apparatus of psychoanalysis, in the analysis of the novel. Thus, I will use Žižek who introduces psychoanalysis into his works. He will relate several theories to Stephen King’s novels and I will use his theories and some of his works in order to explain different concepts I will define in the third section of the paper.

For the reasons stated above I will deal with Slavoj Žižek, a philosopher who applies psychoanalysis to cultural analysis and who likes Stephen King. Although it may be odd to exemplify psychoanalytic theories with fictional horror novels, this is precisely what Žižek does. If we take into account that Stephen King usually deals with mental disorders and different types of pathologies in his work, we can see what a good example they can be for psychoanalysts. I will use some examples from Žižek's work in which he uses King's novels to develop some ideas or explain some concepts.

In *How to Read Lacan*, Žižek uses the example of Jack Torrance and his potential change from writer to murderer in *The Shining*, to refer to the notion of 'Thing' (*das Ding*). The term was first used by Freud to "designate the ultimate object of our desires in its unbearable intensity and impenetrability." (Žižek, 2006: 43) And Žižek sees in it the "connotations of horror fiction: the neighbour is the (Evil) Thing that potentially lurks beneath every homely human face." (Žižek, 2006: 43) Jack fits perfectly in the description of this concept as he is that "homely human face" who has an "evil thing that potentially lurks beneath."

In *The Plague of Fantasies*, Žižek uses King's predilection for corpses and undead people. Some of Stephen King's novels like *Pet Sematary* or *Salem's Lot* deal with the evil that makes people come back from the dead. In the first novel, when the dead come back, they are like zombies that kill every living thing they come across. In *Salem's Lot*, a vampire arrives to a town in Maine and starts killing its inhabitants and turning them into vampires. However, in this particular case, Žižek compares King's novel with the poem of a Slovene poet named France Prešeren and his work 'The Unputrefied Heart':

"Prešeren, perfectly expresses the partial object of drive which is libido: years after a poet's death, his body is excavated for some legal reason; all parts of his corpse are long decayed, except the heart, which remains full of red blood and continues to

palpitate in a mad rhythm – this undead organ which follows its path irrespective of the physical death stands for the blind insistence; it is drive itself. [...] One is tempted to subtitle this poem [...] with Stephen King': it is not such an undead partial organ one of the archetypal motifs of horror stories? Does it not index the point at which sublime poetry overlaps with repulsive horror?" (Žižek, 2008: 42)

In the case of *Salem's Lot*, the partial object of drive is blood. It is what makes the dead corpses alive again. In the case of *The Unputrefied Heart*, as Žižek stated, this object is the libido which keeps the heart beating.

If we wanted to relate this to *The Shining*, we can see the rotten corpse image on the woman of the room 217. This corpse was an old woman who inhabited the room 217 and tried to choke Danny Torrance to death. This lady is one of the multiple dead people in the Overlook Hotel. In this case, it does not have to do with the heart itself, but to King's constant use of dead bodies that come back into the living world. These bodies come back into our world because of their devilish personality. As we will see in the section of the analysis of the novel, I state that in King's works there is no evil which comes from hell, but within the person. These dead bodies are an example of this statement in the sense that they shelter something evil within them, and once they are dead, they can come back into our world because of this 'evil energy' that keep them alive.

These two examples give us some idea of the importance King's works have for Žižek. He may not use them to create new theories, but their main function is to serve as examples for the explanation of Freud's, Lacan's and his own theories.

Different concepts of psychoanalysis can apply to King's novels, and they make it easy for people, who do not know anything about it, the task of understanding those words. The present essay uses these concepts to analyse the novel and argues they allow us to discover some important aspects of *The Shining*.

For Žižek, then, horror novels like King's can be used to explain how certain theoretical concepts from psychoanalysis work, and specially interesting for my essay, his use for some concepts that are going to be applied in the novel.

3. The application of the conceptual apparatus of psychoanalysis to *The Shining*.

3.1.Introduction to the psychoanalysis conceptual apparatus.

For the analysis of the text, I will refer to the field of psychoanalysis quite often and to Slavoj Žižek's approach to Jacques Lacan and Freud. As an introduction of this topic, I will briefly explain the sense in which I use the main concepts of psychoanalysis in this paper. These are:

- The Real
- The Symbolic
- The Imaginary
- The Id
- The Ego
- The Superego
- The Object petit a
- The Other
- Drive
- Repression
- Abjection
- The Uncanny (Unheimliche)
- Juissance

- Repetition
- The Unconscious

The first concepts that we are going to use are the triad ‘Real-Symbolic-Imaginary’ which is useful to explain the dimensions in which every event took place. As Žižek explains, there is more than one dimension in our life although we may think there is only the one that we call “reality”. The difference resides in where actions take place. If what happens is something which escapes our control or which is really unexpected and in excess, then it takes place in the dimension of the Real. If it is something within the system of rules given by the society you live in, then it should be placed in the dimension of the Symbolic. Finally, if it is something that you imagine or you have an impression of, it is placed in the dimension of the Imaginary.

As for the other concepts, there might be different points of view from which we can understand them. I will choose the one that I think it fits better in the context of the novel.

Another triad is the ‘Id-Ego-Superego’. As Žižek explains in his book *How to Read Lacan*, the ““ideal ego”³ stands for the idealized self-image of the subject (...); Ego-Ideal is the agency, (...) the ideal I try to follow and actualize; and superego is the same agency in its vengeful, sadistic, punishing aspect.” (Žižek, 2006: 80)

Both triads of concepts can be related to one another. So the Id is placed in the Imaginary dimension, the Ego is placed in the Symbolic dimension and the Superego is placed in the Real dimension. As Žižek explains,

³ Even though Žižek may refer to the Id as Ideal-Ego and to the Ego as Ego-Ideal, I will use the term Id and Ego as I think it is better not to confuse them.

“ideal ego is imaginary, what Lacan calls the ‘small other’, the idealized mirror-image of my ego; Ego-Ideal is symbolic, the point of my symbolic identification, the point in the big Other from which I observe (and judge) myself; superego is real, the cruel and insatiable agency that bombards me with impossible demands and then mocks my botched attempts to meet them, the agency in whose eyes I am all the more guilty, the more I try to suppress my ‘sinful’ strivings and meet its demands.” (Žižek, 2006: 80)

The Object petit a (or object a) is the cause of desire, it transforms ordinary things into desirable: “a mysterious *je ne sais quoi*, the unfathomable ‘something’ that makes an ordinary object sublime.” (Žižek, 2006: 66)

The Other is the symbolic order, the social rule system, as Žižek says, it is “the anonymous symbolic structure.” (Žižek, 2008: 8) It is related to the Id (Ideal Ego) because the Other is made of values, ideals and rules for the people who live in that particular system; and the Id is acquired in the system the person lives.

The next concept is the Drive (or instinct). According to Freud, “a drive has its source in a physical excitement (state of tension); its *aim* is to suppress this state of tension which reigns in the drive’s source; thanks to the *object*, the drive can achieve its aim.” (Laplanche, 2004: 324) It can be related with the Object petit a, as it is the object which makes possible for the drive to achieve what it wants.

Repression refers to the operation by which a person blocks unpleasant memories, thoughts, etc. It “is one of the defenses mobilized by the mind to deal with conflicts and to protect the Ego from the demands of the instincts.” (de Mijolla, 2005: 1482) However, this concept has a broader meaning. It also means that in a situation in which the satisfaction of our desires comes with a high price, the person puts the satisfaction of the desire off and looks for a substitute.

Another important concept in the following analysis of the novel is Abjection. This notion was defined by Julia Kristeva in her essay *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection*. As she explains it, abjection is

“a brutish suffering that, “I” puts up with, sublime and devastated [...]: I endure it, for I imagine that such is the desire of the other. A massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome. Not me. Not that. But nothing, either. A “something” that I do not recognize as a thing.” (Kristeva, 1982: 2)

Or in other words, abjection can be understood as something that disturbs the person radically and that is not a proper object. If we want to connect it with the triad of Id-Ego-Superego, we can say that if the object “affects” the Ego, the abject affects the Superego. As Kristeva states, “to each ego its object, to each superego its abject.” (Kristeva, 1982: 2)

Related to abjection is the notion of the Uncanny⁴, or as it is named in German, *Das Unheimliche*⁵. *Das Unheimliche* can be defined as “that particular variety of terror that relates to what has been known for a long time, has been familiar for a long time.” (de Mijolla, 2005: 1815) The *unheimliche* concept is really important in the analysis of *The Shining* because it is exemplified by two different characters. On the one hand, it is exemplified by the Hotel. This exemplification is seen when we read the novel for the first time, or in other words, while doing a naïve reading. On the other hand, this concept is exemplified by Jack when he turns into a different person.

⁴ Abjection and *Unheimliche* are related in the sense that abjection includes the experience of *unheimliche*. It means that in abjection, there is an emergence of *unheimliche*, which is what produces that loathsome feeling the person has to endure.

⁵ Although this term has a name in English, I prefer to use the German one because the English term loses some of the connotations it has in the original one.

The next is *Juissance*.⁶ The notion of *juissance* is very different from the ordinary feeling of pleasure. Whenever we refer to *juissance* here, we will have to bear in mind that it may refer not only to the search for pleasure but to the enjoyment of unpleasant situations, sometimes common in horror novels. As de Mijolla explains, Freud pointed out a contradiction in the notion of *juissance*:

“this endeavor [of striving for happiness] has two sides, [...] It aims, on the one hand, at an absence of pain and unpleasure, and, on the other hand, at the experiencing of strong feelings of pleasure.... The task of avoiding suffering pushes that of obtaining pleasure into the background.” (de Mijolla, 2005: 894)

At the same time, “in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud had already noted that “the most painful experiences... can yet be felt... as highly enjoyable.”” (de Mijolla, 2005: 894) For Lacan, “*Juissance* (*Genuss*) is involved when the pleasure principle yields not necessarily to pain, but to unpleasure.” (de Mijolla, 2005: 894) The importance of this notion is that for Freud, *juissance* is felt in situations of pain or when it is experienced a strong pleasure; but for Lacan, this feeling appears in situations in which there is no pain but unpleasure. This difference between Freud’s and Lacan’s connotation of the concept is important in the comprehension of the notion of *juissance* and its later application in the analysis of the novel.

Repetition, according to Laplanche and Pontalis, “is an unconscious process in which the person puts himself in situations that make him repeat past experiences.” (Laplanche, 2004: 68) In psychoanalysis, this is something important because almost every symptom is repetitive:

“especially, if we consider the symptoms, we can find that; on the one hand, some of them are repetitive (for example, the obsessive ceremonials). On the other hand,

⁶ This term can be translated into English as “enjoyment”, although I will use the French one. It is the same case as the concept of *Unheimliche*, because the English term loses some of the connotations it has the French one.

what defines the symptom in psychoanalysis is precisely the fact that it reproduces [...] several elements of a past conflict.” (Laplanche, 2004: 69)

This concept is going to appear several times in the analysis of the characters because they have the tendency of repeating different past experiences, as Jack and the Hotel do. In the case of Danny, we see this process of repetition in the sequel of the novel entitled *Doctor Sleep*. In this novel, Dan Torrance is a grown-up man who suffers from alcoholism like his father did. But in *The Shining*, the clear examples of this process are the Overlook Hotel and Jack Torrance.

The last concept I will define is the Unconscious. According to Donald Rumsfeld, there is a relationship between the known and the unknown:

“There are known knowns. [...] There are known unknowns. [...] What he [Rumsfeld] forgot to add was [...] the ‘unknown knowns’, things we don’t know that we know- which is precisely the Freudian unconscious, the ‘knowledge that doesn’t know itself.’[...] As its most radical, the unconscious is the inaccessible phenomenon, not the objective mechanisms that regulate my phenomenal experiences.” (Žižek, 2006: 52-53)

In other words, it is an agency in which the person knows anything but he is not aware of it. It is opposed to the conscious, the agency in which the person knows and is aware of everything. This concept is going to be useful in the analysis of the characters because most of the times their identity problems will be related to the unconscious.

3.2. Summary of the novel.

Before starting with the analysis of the novel, a summary may be useful in order to understand the study of the identity problems presented in the novel through the main characters Danny and Jack Torrance. If we know the story even in rough outlines, it will be easier to understand what happened, and much more important, why things happened.

The Shining tells the story of the Overlook Hotel and what happens to the Torrance family when they move in for the winter season. The Torrance is not a common family. The father, Jack, who is an alcoholic bad tempered writer and professor, lost his previous job in a college due to a problem with one of his students and had to look for another job as a caretaker of the Hotel. The mother, Wendy, a woman who barely trusts anyone and has little self-confidence, seems to be always jealous of her husband and of his relationship with their son. Finally there is the son, Danny, who is not a normal kid because he has *the shining*, some sort of mental powers which allow him to see and hear things that a normal person cannot. From the very first moment they enter the Hotel, strange things happen to Danny and Jack. What happens to Danny is because he has those mental powers; and what happens to Jack is because he can be easily manipulated. As a result, the Hotel takes advantage of them and forces the family to stay there. Its intentions are not having another set of inhabitants for the eternity, but to get Danny and his powers as its main source of power.

3.3.Influences on King's novel.

In this section of the paper, I will compare King's *The Shining* with Poe's short stories *The Masque of the Red Death*, *The Tell-Tale Heart* and *William Wilson*. As the two writers have similarities in their personal life as well as in their work, I will point out the main visible traces of Poe's stories in King's novel. All the comparisons I will make are related to *The Shining*, so I think they are important for the later analysis of the novel. All the elements that I will analyze are useful to understand different aspects of the novel that are not easy to understand if we analyze them separately from Poe's tales.

Masters of horror novels and stories, Stephen King and Edgar Allan Poe express their personal problems like addiction to drugs and alcohol, in their work. In the case of King's novel, Jack is an alcoholic writer and although it looks like he has quit drinking, although we can see throughout the novel that he did not. However, the main difference between these authors is the generation gap between them.⁷ Taking all this into account, we can see several examples of references to Poe in King's novels.

One example of Poe's influence which is quite obvious on King's appears in *The Shining* when the cuckoo's clock sounds at midnight in the ballroom. It is a clear reference to *The Masque of the Red Death's* clock and what it produces, the temporal suspension of activities and the arrival of death. In Poe's story the clock interrupted the party that prince Prospero was celebrating and announced the coming of the red death. In King's novel, the clock announces death too by revealing what 'redrum' means, when the word is reflected on the glass of the clock so Danny could read the word 'murder':

"The clock began to tick. [...] At XII. (*And the Red Death held sway over all*) [...] Suddenly a huge clock in a glass bowl materialized in front of it. There were no hands or numbers on the clockface, only a date written in red: DECEMBER 2. And then, eyes widening in horror, he saw the word REDRUM reflecting dimly from the glass dome [...]. And he saw that it spelled MURDER." (King, 2012: 446, 452)

Not only is the reference to Poe's tale made explicit when it says "and the Red Death held sway over all" (King, 2012: 446) but the clock is an important element in both stories. In addition, the fact that the phantoms in the room say "*Unmask! Unmask!*" (King, 2012: 452) several times remind us of prince Prospero when he asks the Red

⁷ Edgar Allan Poe was born in the 19th century and Stephen King was born in the second half of the 20th century. Bearing that in mind, it is not odd to think that the two writers have a different background, and this background affected their work.

Death to reveal itself: “when the eyes of Prince Prospero fell upon this spectral image [...] his brow reddened with rage. [...] “Who dares insult us with this blasphemous mockery? Seize him and unmask him.”” (Poe, 1965; 272) In the case of *The Shining*, the one who says “The hour is at hand! [...] Midnight! Unmask! Unmask!” (King, 2012: 522) is a character named Horace Derwent, one of the multiple ghosts the Hotel shelters.

As many of Poe’s tales, there is a lesson we should learn and if we look closer in King’s novels there are lessons to be learned too. The one we can find in Poe would be that you cannot defeat death, no matter how you enclose yourself or how far you try to escape, death will find you. In King’s *The Shining*, characters are enclosed as in Poe’s tale, and death is trying to get them as well, but the only difference here is that not all of them died. In this particular case, what is chasing the characters is in the Hotel itself, not as in *The Masque of the Red Death*. After all, in King’s novel there is salvation, although it is not easy to get.

Another comparison with this short story can be established in the act of taking off the masks. At the very end of Poe’s story, Prospero says “seize him and unmask him –that way we may know whom we have to hang at sunrise.” (Poe, 1965: 272) In King’s novel, there are plenty of references to unmasking as different characters hear voices coming from the ballroom saying “Unmask! Unmask!” (King, 2012: 586) But this one is not the only reference. In one of the final scenes, Danny has a brief conversation with his father once he is already mad, or possessed by the Hotel. He tells him “you’re a mask, [...] just a false face. [...] You won’t be anything at all. You don’t scare me.” (King, 2012: 630) Here we can see that a mask is not just an accessory. In horror stories, and in particular in *The Shining*, the mask is a kind of veil that hides the true self of the character. In Jack’s case, before the action happened, the mask could be his appearance of recovery from his alcoholism and failures but what is behind the mask is his

frustration and rage that can explode at anytime. Once the events took place and he is possessed by the spirit of the Hotel, the mask could be his face or his body itself and the true self that is behind it could be the devilish spirit of the Hotel which possessed and controls him. The fact that this spirit of the Hotel uses Jack's body to get what it wants is important. It tries to pretend everything is fine by using Jack's image, but its eagerness, its frustrations and desires make it look like a monster; or as Danny says, "just a false face." (King, 2012: 630) That is the reason why the mask does not work for the Hotel, because it does not deceive anyone.

Other comparisons between the two writers could be the theme of the 'I'. In Poe's short story *The Tell-Tale Heart*, the 'I' (or 'eye') is something the main character wants to destroy so badly because he can't fully understand it, the only thing we know is that he hates it and he thinks he can do fine without it:

"I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! Yes, it was this! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture- a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees- very gradually- I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever." (Poe, 1965: 303)

In King's *The Shining*, the 'I' is something that Jack tries to repress. It may be his true self, a part that is hidden from the public and that we, as readers, find out little by little while reading about Jack's past. For example, in his phone conversation with his friend Al Shockley, we see that Jack has a past that he tries to hide; "he [Ullman] had to drag out all my dirty laundry. Drinking problem. Lost your last job for racking over a student." (King, 2012: 274) But there are more parts of the novel in which Jack's past is told, like when he broke Danny's arm or when he had a fight with one of the students of his former job. Jack tries to forget about all those things he has done, he tries

to repress those memories, but we will see later that the Hotel will not let him forget that he can do worse things.

But this 'I' is interpreted as the Hotel too. At first Jack does not want to believe what is happening, but once the Hotel's intentions are fully understood by Jack, he seems to agree with them and the consequences they will bring upon him and his family. We can see that when Jack is having a conversation about the Hotel with the former caretaker, Grady who killed his family and another spirit who lives in the Hotel

““They didn't love the Overlook as I did, [...] just as your son and wife don't love it [...] But they will come to love it. You must show them the error of their ways, Mr. Torrance. Do you agree?”

“Yes. I do.”

He did see. He had been too easy with them. [...] He was not ordinarily a harsh man. But he did believe in punishment. And if his son and his wife had willfully set themselves against his wishes, against the things he knew were best for them, then didn't he have a certain duty--?” (King, 2012: 518)

In this conversation Jack is finally convinced that he has to kill his family in order to be the caretaker of the Overlook Hotel permanently. That was what 'the manager' wanted, or in other words, what the Hotel wanted. But I will come back to this later when I analyze the character of the Overlook Hotel.

Going back to the fact that the Hotel is the representation of the 'I', we see that Jack accepted the Hotel's desire but not completely. I mean that he was willing to kill his family, but at the moment he was about killing his son, reason came back to his mind for a second and he tried to fight against the Hotel's control and let Danny escape; “Doc [...]. Run away. Qick. And remember how much I love you” (King, 2012: 632)

Another similarity can be found in Poe's short story *William Wilson*. The similarities between this tale and King's novel are more directly connected with the

topic of this paper. The problem with William Wilson is that he has a split personality. This idea of the double is a way of explaining that the human personality has a dark or evil side. In both stories the double is like another character. For William Wilson it is his “antagonist”, but instead of being the dark side of the man, it is his good side; that other ‘person’ was the one who rebuked William whenever he did something wrong, we can say that it was his conscience. If we try to compare it with *The Shining*, we can say that here we have two options. We can relate this “disorder” to Danny or to Jack Torrance. In the analysis of the novel, I will relate it with Danny, but here I think it is interesting to have a look at the other option.

If we say that Jack is an example of this split, we have to think that for Jack Torrance this “second self” is the Hotel. However, if we do not want to relate these characters here, we can see the split between the “true” Jack and the facade he shows. In any case, this character has violent impulses whose only desire is to ‘punish’ his family because they “plotted against me [the Hotel].” (King, 2012: 630) This is one of Jack’s personalities. The other would be the caring father and beloved husband, although we see that this personality is not the one that prevails. In *William Wilson*, when one self dies the other cannot live without his second self and dies too. In King’s novel it is a little different. If we think about the Hotel as another self for Jack, when Jack dies the Hotel should die too, but it does not. In this case, when the Jack we know as the father and husband died, the Hotel took control over Jack’s body. That is one possible explanation of the psychoanalytical perspective in which the Hotel is not an external character but something which is within Jack. <->

Now, if we think about the split within Jack as the beast and the father/husband, we see that when the beast takes control, his other “self” tries to regain the control although he cannot, so at the end the only thing he can do for his family is to try to kill

himself. However, that trick does not work because the evil spirit is still alive in Jack's body, and once Jack is no longer there, it could do whatever it pleased.

Another connection between both writers is that Poe and King's writing has the same effect on the reader, the possibility of identify oneself with the characters. As Ben P. Indick states

"The weird tale would not merely provide fear for the characters of the story, but would provide *the reader* the greater fear of self-identification. "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Cask of the Amontillado," "The Fall of the House of Usher" have no Satan, no externally influential force, no abstract presence of Evil to direct the characters. [...] Their own decisions will finally destroy them. In this sense, Poe's writing is of true psychological content; the grotesque behavior actually represents the normal distorted by emotion to the extreme. [...] The characters are intense, humorless, compulsive and expressive." (Bloom, 2007: 7-8)

This quote explains that Poe is concerned with the characters' actions, behavior and psyche; King is concerned about that too, and he manages to depict it in his novels by using the evil we have within ourselves. I will come back to this idea later on.

In conclusion, there are some similarities between King and Poe's fiction. The theme of the mask/unmask, the split personality or the fact that both writers deal with the character's psyche and not only with supernatural forces alien to the characters. These similarities contribute to my analysis of *The Shining* in the sense that they make it clearer and easier to find some of the identity problems the characters have. An example would be the split of identity. Without Poe's tale, it could be more difficult for me to identify this problem with Jack and the Hotel as both being part of the same person, and not only with Danny and Tony. They made me think about the possible analysis of the novel taking into account the naïve reading of the novel and the reading in which I applied the conceptual apparatus of psychoanalysis.

3.4. Analysis of *The Shining*.

After the comparison between aspects of this novel and Poe's stories, I will now start the proper analysis of *The Shining*.

The novel can be easily explained if we think of Jack as an alcoholic man with 'deliriums tremens', which means that he sees things when he is drunk or when he does not drink and needs alcohol; we could understand Wendy as a psychologically abused woman with a low self-esteem and Danny as a kid who lives in a broken home and has serious affection problems; and that is why he looks for an imaginary friend to escape the reality he lives in. Likewise, it is easy to blame Jack and Wendy's parents since they are the reason why these characters are like that. In Jack's case, his father was an alcoholic who used to beat his mother. In turn, Wendy had such a great relationship with her father that her mother was jealous of her, and criticised Wendy until she lost all her self-esteem. As for Danny, his parents do not understand him and their problems had a great impact on Danny's behavior, who thus became a lonesome boy.

This would be the interpretation of the whole novel, of the relationships between the members of the family and the influences their behavior has on each other. But the novel goes deeper in the human psyche than that. That is why the study of the topic of this paper is important to understand the novel in depth.

First of all we have to state or distinguish the different identity problems that appear in the novel. The first is the split of identity exemplified by Danny Torrance. Leaving aside his psychic powers, which give the novel its name, he has another self whose name is Tony. At first it seems that Danny sees ghosts or some kind of spirits which show him different kinds of things: "[...] he [Danny] did like to concentrate, because sometimes Tony would come. Not every time. Sometimes [...] Tony would appear at the very limit of his vision, calling distantly." (King, 2012: 41)

Readers may think that Danny only has visions of somebody called Tony who shows him things that have already happened or that are going to happen; we have to wait until the very end of the novel when readers can find the true nature of Tony as he tells Danny that he is actually, a part of him:

“Danny... you’re in a place deep down in your own mind. The place where I am. I’m a part of you, Danny.” (King, 2012: 618) At first, Danny did not want to believe that. He preferred to think that Tony was someone else; “you’re *Tony*. You’re not me.” (King, 2012: 618)

But inside of him, Danny knew that Tony was not an imaginary friend or just a ghost. That is why Tony finally told him “because you knew [...] You’ve always known.” (King, 2012: 619) One clue we had in the novel is that Danny has a middle name which is Anthony, from which the name Tony comes.

For other characters like Jack and Wendy, Tony at first could be any stranger who got near their son, but little by little they start to think that he is only Danny’s imaginary friend. However, they felt that something was wrong with it as Danny knew too many things that he could not possibly know, but that Tony told him;

“because it was frightening, they swept it quickly from their minds. But he [Danny] knew they worried about Tony, Mommy especially, and he was careful about thinking the way that could make Tony come where she might see.” (King, 2012: 43)

If we take into consideration the conceptual apparatus of psychoanalysis, we can say that Tony is part of the unconscious as he is “down in your own mind” (King, 2012: 618) or in other words, he is in Danny’s unconscious because Danny does not know that Tony is part of him and he forms part of the Real world. Having Tony near is not always pleasant as Danny says “[he] as always, felt a warm burst of pleasure at seeing his old friend, but [...] he seemed to feel a prick of fear, too, as if Tony had come with

some darkness hidden behind his back” (King, 2012: 45) and what he shows him is not always something Danny wants to see; “oh please, Tony, you’re scaring me [...] stop it, Tony, stop it.” (King, 2012: 47)

As we will see, Tony is very important in the novel. At the end, we see that he is their only hope of getting out of the Hotel alive, as he is the one who tells Danny how to distract the Hotel in order to escape. It is Danny who saves his mother and Hallorann, the Hotel’s chef. By contrast, Jack is doomed from the beginning. He is the only one who is not going to get out alive, and he knows it because of his deal with the Hotel and his crew.

However, and going back with Danny’s identity, there can be more than this interpretation. Instead of thinking that Tony is part of Danny’s unconscious, we can think of him as a repressed part of Danny. Although he is not an unpleasant memory to force Danny to lock it in the deepest part of his mind as he only appears (almost) when Danny wants, we may think that in some way Danny can be repressing Tony’s existence. He may do it unconsciously as he is not aware of the fact that both are the same. If Tony is part of what it can be called ‘the repressed’, we can think that once he gets to come back to Danny’s mind it is difficult to lock him up again. However, it is not the case. Tony appears whenever Danny is in trouble or when he feels alone. We see at the beginning of the novel, that Tony seems harmless and friendly. Moreover, Danny likes when he comes: “he [Danny] remembered how surprised and pleased he had been to find Tony had followed him all the way from Vermont. So all his friends hadn’t been left behind after all.” (King, 2012: 41) The problem with Tony is that when they move into the Overlook Hotel, Tony doesn’t come alone anymore in the sense that he is not the only one that reaches Danny. So Tony, who at first was Danny’s friend, turned into a more unpleasant visitor. Although it is clear that he is not evil, he brings with him

“some darkness hidden behind his back” (King, 2012: 45) which is something that scared Danny.

Obviously, Tony tries to help Danny to survive. Tony tries to warn him that it is not a good idea to go to the Overlook Hotel, “‘Dane—[...] Too deep, [...] Too deep to get out.’ [...] Now the snow was covering [...] everything.” (King, 2012: 45) But the vision Tony showed Danny did not end there,

“Across the room was a mirror, and deep down in its silver bubble a single word appeared in green fire and that word was: REDRUM [...] More hollow booming noises, steady, rhythmic, horrible. Smashing glass. Approaching destruction. A hoarse voice, the voice of a madman, made the more terrible by its familiarity: *Come out! Come out, you little shit! Take your medicine!* [...] A bellow of rage and satisfaction. REDRUM. Coming.” (King, 2012: 46-47)

Tony shows Danny the dimension of the Real. He is a sort of connection between the Symbolic dimension and the Real. In the first one we face what we call ‘reality’, but in the second one we face all that is beyond our conscious representation of reality: the dimension of the Overlook Hotel and all its crew. That is why Danny and Hallorann, the other character with psychic powers, are the only ones that can see from the start what the Hotel has in its several rooms. A good example would be the scene, in which Danny sees the blood and pieces of brain in the presidential room’s wall,

“Jack and Wendy were so absorbed in the view that they didn’t look down at Danny, who was staring not out the window but at the red-and-white-striped silk wallpaper to the left, where a door opened into an interior bedroom. [...] Great splashes of dried blood, flecked with tiny bits of grayish-white tissue, clotted the wallpaper. [...] He (Danny) deliberately looked out the window, being careful to show no expression on his face. [...] Danny looked cautiously back at the wall. The big dried bloodstain was gone. Those little gray-white flecks that had been scattered all though it, they were gone, too.” (King, 2012: 133-34)

The problem with Danny's visions was that Tony tried to warn him about what was going to happen several times by showing Danny the word 'REDRUM', but it did not matter how many times Tony showed that word to him because he would not understand it as he could not read; he could not understand 'REDRUM', the most important concept that he needed to understand in order to be able to get Tony's warnings right. That is why once the Torrance family got to the Hotel, Danny told his father to teach him how to read,

“Danny was hunched over the first of the five battered primers Jack had dug up by culling mercilessly through Boulder's myriad secondhand bookshops [...] He hunched over the innocuous little books, [...] as though his life depended on learning to read.” (King, 2012: 175)

Indeed, he needed to learn how to read as his life and the rest's depended on his ability to understand the words that appeared in his visions. He was the only one who could actually figure out what 'REDRUM' meant. At first Danny asked what that meant to Jack, “Daddy [...] what's redrum?” (King, 2012: 186) but he could only think of an Indian sort of tool: “Red drum? Sounds like something an Indian might take on the warpath.” (King, 2012: 186) That is why salvation is placed on Danny. He is the only one who will be able to understand what is going on as he has 'the shining'. As Hallorann explained to him, ‘what you got son, I call it shining on, the Bible calls it having visions, and there's scientists that call it precognition. [...] They all mean seeing the future.’ (King, 2012: 121) The only thing he needs is to master it.

In conclusion, Danny's split identity is important in the action of the novel as much as in the evolution of the character. Tony, as his other-self, has the answers Danny looks for all along the novel.

The second identity issue can be more difficult to classify. It is Jack's. The problem with him might not be that he just went mad, but that the Hotel drove him crazy by possessing him. Or maybe the Hotel's influence was only the trigger of his mental instability and that is why "the father, a modest failed writer, gradually turns into a killer beast who, with an evil grin, goes on to slaughter his entire family." (Žižek, 2006: 43)

According to Žižek, Jack is a clear example of post-traumatic Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD) as he had a traumatic past in which his father used to beat him, his mother and his brothers:

"It had not seemed strange to Jack that his father won all his arguments with his children by use of his fists, and [...] that his own love should go hand in hand with his fear. [...] He had beaten their mother for no good reason at all, suddenly and without warning." (King, 2012: 329)

In *The Plague of Fantasies*, Žižek explains that "there are four variations on the relationship between the Self and 'its' Body which violate the standard moral-legal norm of 'one person in one body.'" (Žižek, 2008: 180) Two of these variations are important here. The first, different persons cohabiting in the same body, is related to Jack. We can say that within Jack there are at least two different persons: the caring father and writer who only cares about being successful in order to give his family a better life, and the maniac and aggressive man who destroys everything he touches. There can be no unity of the subject as these personalities cannot form a single entity. Moreover, we will discover throughout the novel that one of these two personalities is dominant, and that is why one ends up taking a complete control over Jack. This can be seen at the end of the novel, when he is chasing his son with the roque mallet,

"The face in front of him (Danny) changed. It was hard to say how; there was no melting or merging of the features. The body trembled slightly, and then the bloody

hands opened like broken claws. [...] But suddenly his daddy was there, looking at him in mortal agony [...] It bent over, exposing the knife handle in its back. Its hands closed around the mallet again, but instead of aiming at Danny, it reversed the handle, aiming the hard side of the roque mallet at its own face. [...] Then the mallet began to rise and descend, destroying the last of Jack Torrance's image. [...] When it turned its attention back to Danny, his father was gone forever. What remained of the face became a strange, shifting composite, many faces mixed imperfectly into one. [...] "Masks off, then," it whispered. "No more interruptions." [...] And it came to him." (King, 2012: 632-34)

In this quote we can perfectly see that mixture of identities within one body and the fact that one personality is dominant. In the case of Jack, the caring father and husband is not the personality that will survive, but the aggressive man with murderous impulses. There was the Hotel and all its evil ways within Jack's body. That was the end of Jack Torrance, the father, the husband and the writer; and the full apparition of the murderer beast which, and quoting Žižek again, "potentially lurks beneath every homely human face." (Žižek, 2006: 43)

The other possible variation is the one in which different bodies form one single personality. In this case, we can think of a clear example in the aliens, "multiple bodies, but one collective mind." (Žižek, 2008: 181) Here, the only 'character' that could fit in the description is the Hotel. If we take it as a character, it is easy to see that there are different 'bodies' within it; taking into account that different bodies here refer to the different ghosts that inhabit the Hotel. The single collective mind would be "the manager." (King, 2012: p 506) The most accurate interpretation of that sort of character which we never see is that it refers to the evil that resides in the Hotel, the one which gives it the power to become something more than a simple building.

So here we have these two options for what Žižek calls post-traumatic Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD). One can be exemplified by the Hotel and its multiplicity of identities or characters within it, and the other one can be exemplified by Jack and his “double” personality.

But let’s go back to Jack’s identity issue. For Žižek,

“the subject who suffers from MPD is rather too firmly anchored in ‘true reality’: what he lacks is, in a sense, lack itself: the void which accounts for the constitutive dimension of the subjectivity.” (Žižek, 2008: 181)

In order to understand this I should explain two concepts I did not explain earlier. The first one is subjectivity. When we talk about subjectivity or subjects we should bear in mind that subjectivity is not the same as identity. While identity is a set of characteristics of an object that allows us to identify it, subjectivity refers to the production of a subject through discourse and ideology. The other concept I will explain is lack. A broad definition of lack will be the absence of something, but in this particular case, lack will be the absence of absence; “what he [the subject] lacks is, [...] lack itself.” (Žižek, 2008: 181) Although this may seem chaotic, in psychoanalysis the fact that someone has no limits or boundaries is something negative and can lead to different mental disorders and pathologies like the MPD.

It is important to know that Jack’s MPD is not caused by any desire of creating a version of himself that actually fulfils his expectations, but it is caused by his traumatic past. In this sense, he is the older version of Danny. Both of them had a broken home. For Jack, his dad was his ideal type of man. That is repeated in his relationship with his son. Danny sees his father as the man he wants to become when he grows up. That is why Danny will probably become like his father. What emerges in this repetition is the problem of the character’s relationship with the symbolic. As Clare Hanson said in her essay *Stephen King: Powers of Horror*,

“what threatens Danny is Jack’s insecure hold on the symbolic: this insecurity expressed through his rejection of his wife, Wendy, and his failure to hold down his job as a teacher, to fill his appointed social role. Jack resists what Sartre would call the [...] “real” world of propositions and action. Almost consciously he embraces the unreal, the irrational, the “sleep of reason” which, as Goya says, “breeds monsters.” (Bloom, 2007: p 52)

It seems that Jack was mentally unstable from the very beginning but that he was trying to pull himself together until he could not do it anymore. We can see this when he had those violent breakdowns of anger and he broke Danny’s arm,

“Lost your temper [...] (When he went back into his study and saw Danny standing there, wearing nothing but his training pants and a grin, a slow, red cloud of rage had eclipsed Jack’s reason. [...] His manuscript, the three-act play he had been slowly developing from a novelette he had written seven years ago as an undergraduate, was scattered all over the floor. He had been drinking a beer [...] when Wendy said the phone was for him, and Danny had poured the can of beer all over the pages. Probably to see it foam. [...] He stepped deliberately toward his three-year-old son [...] Danny began to say something and that was when he had grabbed Danny’s hand and bent it to make him drop the typewriter eraser and [...] screamed. [...] the snap of the breaking bone had not been loud, not loud but it had been very loud, HUGE, but not loud).” (King, 2012: 22-3)

Throughout the novel he regrets having done that, and he tries to control his impulses, but at the end they overcome him and ‘let out the beast’.

If we try to develop Jack’s change using the three different dimensions (Imaginary, Symbolic and Real), we see his progressive journey throughout the novel. First he is in the symbolic dimension. He cannot see more than what surrounds him in what we call reality. As a writer, this standstill frustrates him because he cannot write anything worthy, and it can be one of the main reasons why he ends up losing his mind.

He reaches that final step (losing his mind) when he and his family are enclosed in the Hotel. This is what allows him to go into the Real dimension; in which the true Hotel resides, and where he disappears in a vain attempt to save his son's life.⁸

Using the psychoanalysis conceptual apparatus, we can say that for Jack the Hotel is part of the Real. The reason is quite simple. If we go back to the definition of this concept, we will see that it is something which escapes our control or which is really unexpected and in excess. In this sense, the Hotel is something that escapes from Jack's control. It becomes part of Jack and he cannot do anything to prevent his transformation into someone else.

As we see through the novel, Jack desperately needs to become successful and get his family's approval. In order to get the acknowledgement he is looking for; Jack is going to try to kill his family. A sane person would reject that kind of assignment, but we see that in a sense, he enjoys it. This can be interpreted as the experience of the *Juissance*. In this particular case, it does not refer to any search of pleasure but to Jack's enjoyment of that unpleasant situation which is causing his family pain and their death, "It grinned with broken-toothed greed." (King, 2012: 634) Nevertheless, who experiences *Juissance*? The Hotel? Jack? In order to solve this, we need to take into account that until the moment in which Jack hit his face with the roquet mallet, his identity was still changing, so it is not really clear if it was the Hotel or Jack who went through that experience. Nevertheless, what is important here is Jack's experience of the *juissance* through the recognition of the symbolic order. We should take into account that in order for the *juissance* to take place, it is needed some knowledge of what is acceptable or not to be able to know what is pleasurable and what is not. Here, the symbolic rules determine that killing your family is highly unacceptable and it should

⁸ The quote in page 30 (King, 2012: 632-34), exemplifies this change in Jack and his disappearance when the Hotel finally took control over him.

not bring you any pleasure. But as the experience of the *jouissance* can occur in unpleasant situations, the recognition of this one as highly unpleasant and its enjoyment is what makes the experience of *jouissance* possible.

Something we should bear in mind while analyzing Jack's identity problem when we face a situation like this is that we cannot be totally sure if he is still the caring father and husband or if the Hotel has taken control of him, because in psychoanalysis the Hotel is not a mere building, but one of Jack's dimensions and not something external. However, there are several clues that can help us. For example, when Jack is more the Hotel than himself, the other characters like Danny refer to him as 'it'; "It was coming up. And Danny knew who –what– was in it. [...] It had come closer. [...] "Danny!" it roared. [...] It came around the corner. In a way, what Danny felt was relief. It was not his father." (King, 2012: 623-24, 629) This quote exemplifies what I said about the pronoun 'it' while referring to the Hotel. As the Overlook is an indefinite entity, the characters will not refer to it as a person but as a thing, but I will come back to this later when analyzing the Hotel. When Jack is himself, the other characters in order to refer to him, use the third person personal pronoun 'he'.

Another notion that I found relevant for the analysis of the novel is the *objet petit a*. In this case, I would say that Danny is the *objet petit a* for the Hotel, as he is "what causes desire." (Žižek, 2006: 66) The only thing the Overlook wants is Danny. It needs him to absorb his energy, his power, and so keep living stronger as ever; "The manager. [...] Later he expects to see to your son's well-being himself. He is very interested in your son. Danny is a talented boy." (King, 2012: 506) Jack had thought that it was him what the Hotel wanted, that is why he was surprised to hear that from the ghost bartender Lloyd at first; "(It's me they must want... isn't it? I am the one. Not Danny.)" (King, 2012: 507)

But, taking things a little further, we could say that Danny has this *object petit a* inside of him as he has “‘something’ that makes an ordinary object sublime” (Žižek, 2006: 66) or in other words, if we think of this as his *shining*, we can say that only a part of Danny is the *object petit a*. His mental powers are what make him special in general and particularly for the Hotel. This reading allows us to connect concepts from psychoanalysis like the *object petit a* to other elements in the novel as it is the Overlook.

Related to the *object petit a*, we have another concept we need to take into consideration: the Drive. It refers to the impulse to achieve an aim through the object of desire, we can say that the desire of the Hotel is to get Danny, his *object petit a* because “thanks to the *object*, the drive can achieve its aim.” (Laplanche, 2004: 324) That is why the Overlook lies to Jack promising him things he wants, in order to get him kill Danny so his spirit will feed the evil energy that it has.⁹

But if we do not want to apply this concept to the Hotel, it certainly applies to Jack. His drive would be the impulse he has to be a successful man. In order to achieve that, he has to kill his family and his ‘prize’ will be a good position within the Overlook and the feeling of success. Throughout the novel we have seen him trying to write, as he was a writer among many other things, but failing over and over again. His inability to fulfill his goal made him a perfect victim for the Hotel. His desperation made him vulnerable, and the Hotel knew exactly how to proceed. In a conversation Jack had with Grady the former caretaker and now another servant of the Hotel, we find out who left the book that obsessed Jack with the history of the Hotel. Grady said “For instance, you show a great interest in learning more about the Overlook Hotel. [...] A certain scrapbook was left in the basement for you to find –” (King, 2012: 520) and when Jack asked him who left it there, Grady answered “By the manager, of course. Certain

⁹ See quote page 34, (King, 2012: 506)

materials could be put at your disposal, if you wish them..." (King, 2012: 520) This was Jack's 'Achilles' heel'. His curiosity for the Hotel was his downfall. He himself replied to Grady "I do. Very much." (King, 2012: 520) And after what Jack said, we are told that "He tried to control the eagerness in his voice and failed miserably." (King, 2012: 520).

These quotes explain quite well the problem with Jack. He wanted so much to write something he considered 'good' that when the Hotel gave him the opportunity to learn about it, he swallowed the bait and forgot everything he cared about.

Another relevant notion for the connection between the novel and the conceptual apparatus of psychoanalysis is the Uncanny or *Unheimliche*. As I explained before when I briefly defined the main concepts in the section 3.1 of the paper, the *Unheimliche* refers to something familiar that is at the same time something strange and horrific. If we look for it within the novel, we can apply this concept to the character of Jack. He was Wendy's husband and Danny's father, who turned into something unknown and horrific as he was possessed by the Hotel's evil. In this sense, we can say that Jack is part of the *Unheimliche*. In addition, another interpretation can be made if we focus on the figure of the Overlook Hotel. In this case, a building which is familiar to almost everyone and offers protection to the people who stay in it, it turns into something wicked and dangerous.

In King's novels evil things are not related to religion, they are not demons that come from hell. On the contrary, in these novels, evil resides in the human being. In the case of the Hotel, it resides in the spirits it has inside. This is another reason why King is worth analyzing from a psychoanalytical point of view, because evil does not come from hell, but most of the times it comes from within the person.

Now, going back to the analysis of the novel, there is another concept that can be connected with it. It is Abjection.

Going back to the definitions of the psychoanalysis concepts, abjection can be understood as something that disturbs someone. Something a person does not recognize as a thing but that is there. As in any horror novel, this concept can be found in *The Shining*; because it is common in horror stories that we can find something which disturbs us; sometimes it is not a thing but we may relate it to some kind of feeling the story produces.

This concept is the most difficult to find in the novel as we cannot apply it to any character nor object. The possible interpretation I found of this is Danny's despair for learning how to read in order to be able to understand the word 'redrum'. This concept is related to the feeling that Danny has towards this word as he spends almost all the novel not knowing what it meant. The problem is that he knows it is something important, but as he cannot read, he can only feel hopeless and desperate. We see that he tries so hard to understand its meaning and not achieving that goal makes him feel that way. That is why something that is 'familiar' for everyone, it is disturbing for Danny as he cannot understand it.

Finishing with Danny and Jack's problems, the last identity issue that I will analyze will be exemplified by the Hotel itself. In this case, there are a lot of identities at the same time. What I mean is that the Overlook Hotel is more than a Hotel. It houses some evil energy that possesses people in order to survive. But this is not the only issue. It may happen that the Hotel itself, or that evil energy, is represented at the end of the novel as a dark shadow shape. So here we face two identity issues instead of one. But before I start analyzing the problem, I will come back to what I mentioned before about

the way the characters refer to the Hotel. Given that it is a thing, the characters refer to the Overlook as 'it', but if we take into account that there is something living inside of it, and that most of the time it is represented by different spirits or bodies (as Jack's), they could refer to it as 'he' or 'they'. Even if there is more than one spirit representing it, the pronoun is not going to change. For example, that is why Danny calls his dad 'it' when he is no longer himself; "You're not my daddy [...]. You're *it*, not my daddy. You're the hotel" (King, 2012: 631)

In the novel, we know that the Hotel has many spirits living as a part of it, and we can guess that Jack was not the first person it deceived. The first case we are told about is Grady's, the former caretaker, but there is not so much information besides the fact that he killed his wife and daughters and then he killed himself.

Even though at first it may seem that the Hotel is an independent entity, from the perspective of psychoanalysis it is something different. What happens to Jack is not something personal at all because the unconscious is suprapersonal. It means that although it took place inside Jack's mind, it had nothing to do with him at all. It happened to Grady too, or at least it is what we may think, so it was not something 'exclusive' of Jack. That is what we will come up with if we read the novel applying the conceptual apparatus of psychoanalysis instead of doing a naïve reading of it.

At the beginning of the novel, when Jack is in the job interview, Ullman, the manager of the Hotel told him what happened to Grady;

"I suspect that what happened came as a result of too much cheap whiskey, of which Grady had laid in a generous supply [...] and a curious condition which the old-timers call cabin fever. [...] He killed them, Mr. Torrance, and then committed suicide. He murdered the little girls with a hatchet, his wife with a shotgun, and himself the same way." (King, 2012: 12)

What Ullman did not know was that it was the Hotel that turned Grady into a murderer and supplied the alcohol to him, as it did with Jack. And maybe it was not the “cabin fever” that drove Grady and Jack mad until they killed their families and then themselves, but the Hotel promising them that they would get something they wanted after they committed those murders.

This was the only information we had about what happened with Grady and his family. Later on, when Jack met him at the Hotel and asked him if he was Grady the former caretaker, he said that he was not. He said that the only caretaker known in the history of the Overlook was Jack:

““Pardon me, but... what’s your name?”

“[...] Grady, sir. Delbert Grady.”

“[...] Weren’t you once the caretaker here? When you... when...”

“[...] Why no, sir. I don’t believe so.”

“ But your wife... your daughters...”

“My wife is helping in the kitchen, sir. The girls are asleep, of course.”

“[...] You were the caretaker. You—” *Oh say it!* “You killed them.”

“[...] I don’t have any recollection of that at all, sir.”

“[...] But you—”

“*You’re* the caretaker, sir, [...] You’ve *always* been the caretaker. I should know, sir.

I’ve always been here. The same manager hired us both, at the same time.”

“[...] Mr. Ullman—”

“I know no one by that name, sir. [...] The manager, [...] The *hotel*, sir. Surely you realize who hired you, sir.” (King, 2012: 516-17)

By now, we do not have much information about how the Hotel manages to deceive people and get what it wants. Jack would be the first person we know the Hotel tricks in detail and at the end, when he is not useful anymore then the Hotel tries to

influence Hallorann. This is what happens at first sight, but psychoanalysis solves these mysteries.

But let's go back to the Hotel's trickery. When its first option, which was Jack, failed his assignment, the only option left for the Hotel before turning into dust was to possess Hallorann and try to convince him to kill Wendy and Danny;

“Suddenly he stopped, looked wonderingly at the mallet in his hands, and asked himself with rising horror what it was he had been thinking of doing. Murder? Had he been thinking of murder? For a moment his entire mind seemed filled with an angry, weakly hectoring voice: (Do it! Do it, you weak-kneed no-balls nigger! Kill them! KILL THEM BOTH!)” (King, 2012: 649)

This passage belongs to the end of the novel. Once the Hotel is burning down and it seems the evil that resided there is gone, Hallorann heard that voice which persuaded him to kill Danny. We know it was the last attempt the Hotel could make to get Danny, but as Hallorann resisted the impulse to kill anyone, what was left of the Hotel disappeared in the night.

Going back to the issue of the Hotel's identity, we know that there is something wrong with it, but we never know exactly what it is. Only at the end of the novel, we see a glimpse of what it could be or what it could be made of. There are two passages in the novel that show this: on the one hand, when Jack is chasing Danny in order to kill him. In this scene, Jack has already smashed his face with the mallet and “what remained of the face became a strange, shifting composite, many faces mixed imperfectly into one. Danny saw the woman in the 217; the dogman; the hungry boy-thing that had been in the concrete ring.” (King, 2012: 634) There is another scene at the very end of the novel when the Hotel bursts into flames,

“From the window of the Presidential Suite he [Hallorann] thought he saw a huge dark shape issue, blotting out the snowfield behind it. For a moment it assumed the

shape of a huge, obscene manta, and then the wind seemed to catch it, to tear it and shred it like the old dark paper. It fragmented, was caught in a whirling eddy of smoke, and a moment later it was gone as if it had never been. [...] The thing in the sky was gone and it might only have been smoke or a great flapping swatch of wallpaper after all, and there was only the Overlook, a flaming pyre in the roaring throat of the night.” (King, 2012: 645-46)

The faces mixed in Jack’s and the dark shape, are the only ways in which that evil thing is seen. But what is it? Is it a mixture of all those people who died in the Hotel? Is it that dark shape? Is it the evil impulse the human being has inside? Those questions are never answered in the novel, but we can interpret the Hotel’s identity as a mixture of all these options. Depending on the way we read the novel, there are two main possibilities we can interpret the Hotel’s identity. The first one is from a naïve reading of the novel. The Hotel is a ‘haunted’ building in which something evil is ready to possess Jack and get Danny so it can feed on his shining. However, if we apply the conceptual apparatus of psychoanalysis to the novel, we can think of the Hotel in a different way. In this case, the Hotel is not an external evil which possesses Jack, but an internal impulse or force that turns Jack into a different person; it turned him into a ‘monster’.

To sum up, the Hotel is the evil thing that lurks behind the human being itself, that evil side of us which was materialized in all those spirits. At the end, when it could not take its strength from them, from their energy, the only thing that remained was its dark shape; that shadow of devilish energy that wanted to stay alive no matter what.

4. Conclusions.

Having analyzed the character’s identity problems, I will now summarize my conclusions.

The first one is that Stephen King's *The Shining*, even though it is a horror novel, it can be considered more than that. Žižek thought that King's novels were useful in order to explain certain psychoanalytical concepts related to horror and more specifically, to horror novels and stories. This is not so surprising if we take into account that King likes to get into his characters psyche and reveal different traumas or other characteristics worth analysing with the psychoanalysis apparatus. King's novel *The Shining*, is a good example of a story which is a mixture of different pathologies and problems with oneself identity as much as a mixture of paranormal and horror events.

In Danny's split or Jack's progressive loss of identity, even with the Hotel's multiplicity and/or lack of, we find that psychological issues can be terrifying. King knows how to create an atmosphere in which horror and mental pathologies are intertwined. Having that in mind, we are likely to think that this is not a common horror story. It can be analysed from different points of view.

On the one hand, we have the perspective of a novel within the popular culture framework, *The Shining* is one of the multiple bestsellers in the North American market, and King one of the masters of horror of the late 20th and 21st century. It is a novel full of evil spirits and people with mental powers, all of them enclosed in what we can call 'a haunted house'. This perspective comes from a naïve reading of the novel.

On the other hand, we have the perspective of a reading that applies the conceptual apparatus of psychoanalysis. This novel is a good example of different mental pathologies: the different fights of the Ego-Id-Superego for the total control of the person, the drives and the experience of the *jouissance* or *object petit a*.

Besides, the story as a novel which has to do with the human psyche, is interesting for the psychoanalytic field and it lets us see how characters behave; and

develop, and how humans face some of the problems they may encounter through fiction. That is why psychoanalysis has certain importance when studying popular culture. I have used Žižek because he applies the conceptual apparatus of psychoanalysis to popular texts to make a cultural analysis. As he connected both of them, it is easy to see that while studying popular culture we need to take into account psychoanalysis. For example, Žižek uses movies like *Casablanca* or *Alien* to explain different terms from the conceptual apparatus of psychoanalysis. This way we can see clearly what they mean and we can have 'practical' examples.

In conclusion, popular culture and psychoanalysis are related in a way in which one can be understood through the study of the other, and this paper pointed out this relation between them by using the conceptual apparatus of psychoanalysis and a novel which can be included in the category of popular culture.

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